

Study of Certain Characteristics of Books in Hindi for Neo-Literate

By

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I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the present study is to identify certain characteristics of popular and less popular books in Hindi for neo-literates.

Terms defined

Neo-literates are persons above the age of 14 years. They have completed the prescribed course of literacy training and are able to read, write and understand the reading materials meant for them.

Popular books are those which have been issued at least 15 times within a year from a library.

Less popular books are those which have been issued 5 times or less within a year from a library.

The following characteristics of books have been studied:

- (i) Physical make-up
- (ii) Illustrations
- (iii) Theme and content
- (iv) Style and presentation.

II. RELATED STUDIES

Mushtaq Ahmed made an investigation in India in 1956, under the directorship of C.G. Richards of UNESCO, in this field. This study shows that physical make-up, illustrations, vocabulary, printing and style are important for popularity of books.¹

He also evaluated the reading materials for neo-literates in India in 1958. He based his study on interviews and ascertained some of the characteristics of reading materials, such as, total pages, size, cover, stitching, illustrations, paper, type size, content, sentence length and vocabulary.²

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1. Richards, C.G. The provision of Popular Reading Materials. UNESCO., 1959. pp. 15-39.
 2. Ahmed, Mushtaq. An Evaluation of Reading Materials for New Literates and a study of their Reading needs and Interests. H.I.P. Centre, Jamia Millia, 1958.

III. METHODS

There are several techniques for ascertaining popularity of books, such as,

- (a) asking the readers their preference for the type of books;
- (b) collecting opinions from librarians, literacy teachers and publishers;
- (c) issuing books to the readers and asking their liking;
- (d) consultation of library records.

Every device has some advantage and some disadvantage. Some of them are not so reliable and some are very much expensive and time consuming. Consultation of library records has advantage over others. It is reliable and less expensive and less time consuming. Hence, it was decided to use this device for ascertaining popularity of books.

The present study is based upon the consultation of the library records of Delhi Public Library, which circulates its books in every corner of Delhi city through mobile vans. There are many halting stations wherefrom books are being issued. Books are returned within 14 days from the date of issue.

Books, which are in the library for at least one year (accessed before 15th of August, 1962 to 15th of August, 1963), are drawn for the purpose. There are 266 books which are collected from 7 halting stations

of Delhi Public Library. The criterion for determining popularity of books is the number of times they have been issued within a year. Hence, books are categorised as follows:

	No. of books
1. 5 times and less within a year	39
2. 6 times to 14 times within a year	191
3. 15 times and above within a year	88

From both extremes 15 books are selected for study. Hence, 77 books are to be analysed for ascertaining their certain characteristics. Books issued 5 times and less within a year are 39 and have been assigned in the category of less popular and 15 times and above are 88 and in the category of popular.

All these books have been analysed with respect to the subject and the principal theme. Selected 20 books, 10 in each category, have been analysed with respect to other characteristics also. Analysis has been done as per Analysis Sheet at Appendix-I. It is an attempt to construct an instrument that might analyse books objectively. Experts' opinion has been considered for avoiding the scope of personal judgement. However, it might not be claimed that this instrument is bias-proof.

IV. COLLECTION OF DATA

The data collected are presented in a tabular form at Appendix-II. They have been tabulated and analysed. Statistical treatment might not give the general law regarding characteristics as books are insufficient in number. Hence, descriptive treatment is completed and recorded in Section-V. The results are interpreted and recorded in Section-VI.

V. RESULTS

The results obtained on the characteristics studied are described below and tables for which are at Appendix-III.

Physical make-up

(i) Titles:

Out of 20 books, 11 had short titles and among them 7 were popular. Out of the remaining 9 long titled books, 3 were popular. (Table 1/1)

(ii) Total Pages:

Out of 20 books, 15 had total pages below 40. Of these 5 were popular and 10 were less popular. The remaining 5 books having total pages 40 and above were popular. (Table 1/2)

(iii) Covers:

Out of 20 books, 10 had board cover, of which 6 were popular. 7 had heavy paper cover, of which 3 were popular and 3 had light paper cover, of which one was popular. (Table - 1/3).

(iv) Type-size:

Out of 20 books, 14 had type-size 16 point and above. Of these 10 were popular. The remaining 6 books had the type-size below 16 point and all were less-popular. (Table 1/4)

The difference was found to be significant. Hence, it appears that books, having type-size 16 point and above, are popular among neo-literates.

(v) Cover-Illustrations:

Out of 20 books 18 had cover-illustrations, of which 15 were clearly illustrated. Of the latter 10 were popular. 3 books not clearly illustrated were less-popular. The remaining unillustrated 2 books were less-popular (Table 1/5).

The difference was found to be significant. Hence, it appears that clear cover illustrations influence popularity of books.

(vi) Ratio of Illustrations to total pages:

Out of 20 books, 19 had the ratio to total pages below 50% and 9 were popular. The remaining one having the ratio to total pages 50% and above was in popular category. (Table 1/6)

(vii) Kind of text-illustrations:

Out of 18 text-illustrated books, 4 had half-tone and all were popular, 5 had line-drawing and 2 were popular and 5 had both kinds of illustrations and 3 were popular.

THEME AND CONTENT

1. Subjects:

Out of 77 books, 17 were story books and 14 were popular. Social studies books were 17. Of which 6 were popular. Out of 10 history books 8 were popular (Table 2).

2. Principal themes:

Out of 77 books, 9 were dealing with the life sketch of greatmen. Of these 6 were popular. There were 6 books dealing with imaginative objects and all were popular. There were 6 books dealing with agricultural devices and all were less popular. There was only one book dealing with diet which was less popular. (Table 3).

PRESENTATION:

1. Sentences per page:

Out of 20 books, 5 had 18 sentences and above per page on average and 15 books had below 18 sentences per page. Of the first category, 2 were popular and of the second category, 8 were popular. (Table 4/1).

2. Words per sentence:

Out of 20 books, 10 had 8 short sentences and above per page on average and 10 had below 18 words per sentence. In the former 4 books were popular and 6 in the latter. (Table 4/2)

3. Short sentences per page:

Out of 20 books, 10 had 3 short sentences and above per page on average and 10 had below 3 short sentences per page. In the first category 6 books were popular and 4 in the second category. (Table 4/3).

4. Short words per page:

Out of 20 books 15 had 30 short words and above per page on average and 5 had below 30 short words per page. In the former 8 were popular and 2 in the latter (Table 4/4).

5. Length of paragraph in sentences:

Out of 20 books, 10 had 6 sentences and above per paragraph on average and the remaining 10 had below 6 sentences per paragraph. (Table 4/5).

VI. INTERPRETATION

Present study does not indicate anything definite to state that short title attracts the attention of the neo-literates. It does not show that the less number of pages accounts for popularity. It may be as the neo-literates belong to urban area, they might have developed reading habits and could easily read books with more number of pages.

Clear cover illustration might be regarded as the characteristic of popular books for neo-literates. It is clear by the present study that books having clear cover illustrations are preferred by them. It is obvious that books having type size of 16 point and above are liked by neo-literates. Mushtaq Ahmed states "the interesting trend that the percentage of those who are satisfied with the type as it goes on getting bigger increases till 24 point type..... But it is surprising that at 24 point 100% respondents approve and there is neither the desire for bigger nor for smaller size of type".¹

Present study does not find out any conclusive results regarding the ratio of text illustrations to total pages.

1. Ahmed Mushtaq: An Evaluation of Reading Materials for New-Literates and a study of their reading Needs and Interests. R.T.P. Centre, Jamia Millia, New Delhi, 1958, p.107.

Previous studies state that books dealing with the theme of daily life of the readers would be popular. But on the basis of the present study it cannot be stated that this is true. As the study is confined to urban area, the popular books are those dealing with life of greatmen, urban life and imaginative life. Story books seem to be popular among neo-literates. It may be that the readers want to be relaxed after their daily work. Social studies and biography books seem to be popular. However, the finding does not show definitely that books dealing with the need of the readers would be popular.

The present study does not show any definite tendency in respect of the number of sentences per page and the number of words per sentence. Books having short words, short sentences and short paragraphs per page might not be definitely said to be popular.

VII. LIMITATIONS

This study has its limitations as follows:

1. The books selected are only from Delhi Public Library. They are being issued for the neo-literates of only Delhi City. The needs and interests of the neo-literates of Delhi City may differ from the neo-literates of other cities.
2. There were some books which were already issued, and as any record is not being maintained to know the times issued except the "due-date-slips", so those books had not been included in the study.
3. The library does not print in the issue register, so the number of times each book issued was based upon 'due-date slips'.
4. The number of books were not in a large number in the library. Had there been more books, the popularity of each book might have changed.
5. The number of books analysed were only 20 and so the general law cannot be framed.

It may be recorded that this study fails to establish any general law regarding characteristics of books for neo-literates. However, this study might lead to further work in this field.

VIII. SUMMARY

Purpose of the present study was to identify certain characteristics, such as, physical make-up, illustrations, theme and content, and style and presentation, of popular and less popular books in Hindi for neo-literates. Studies conducted by Mushtaq Ahmed show that physical make-up, illustrations, vocabulary, printing and style all influence popularity of books.

Consultation of library records for collecting data regarding popularity of books was regarded as appropriate for this study. This device of data collection was considered more reliable and less time consuming and less expensive than any others.

Data were collected from 7 halting stations of Delhi Public Library. There were 268 books in all which were continuously for one year (before 15th of August, 1962 to 15th of August, 1963) in the library. They were arranged on the basis of times issued and 15% were drawn from both extremes. Books issued 5 times and less within a year were categorised as less popular and 15 times and above within a year were categorised as popular. There were 77 books, of which 39 were less popular and 38 were popular. All the books were analysed with respect to subject and principal theme and 20 books, 10 in each category, were analysed as per analysis sheet.

The results obtained did not show that all characteristics studied influence popularity, except two - (i) type-size and (ii) cover illustrations. Books having type-size of 16 point and above were popular among neo-literates. Similarly, books having clear cover illustrations were popular. Difference in both the characteristics was found to be significant. Regarding subject and principal theme it is very difficult to say that they influence the popularity of books. In other cases the difference was found to be insignificant.

The present study was limited to 7 halting stations of Delhi Public Library and books analysed with respect to all the characteristics were only 20. Hence, general law could not be framed.

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2. Gunning Robert. The Technique of Clear Writing. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958.
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4. Mushtaq Ahmed. A survey of Reading Materials for Neo-Literates in India. New Delhi: Research, Training and Production Centre, Jamia Nagar, 1957.
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APPENDIX

Table 1 PHYSICAL MAKE-UP

Characteristics	NUMBER OF BOOKS		Total	Remarks
	Popular	Less Popular		
1. Title				
(9 letters & more)	3	6	9	Not significant
short title (8 letters & less)	7	4	11	
Total	10	10	20	
2. Total pages	5		5	Not significant
40 pages & above.	5	10	15	
Below 40 pages	10	10	20	
3. Covers				
Board	6	4	10	Not significant
Heavy paper	3	4	7	
Light paper	1	2	3	
Total	10	10	20	
4. Type Size				
16. point & above	10	4	14	Significant
Below 16 point		6	6	
Total	10	10	20	
5. Cover Illustrations				
Illustrated clearly	10	5	15	Significant
Not clearly illustrated		3	3	
Not illustrated		2	2	
Total	10	7	17	

TABLE 2.			
Subject	NUMBER OF BOOKS		Total
	Popular	Less popular	
Story	14	3	17
Social studies	6	11	17
History	3	7	10
Health and Hygiene	2	5	7
Agriculture		6	6
Biography	3	2	5
General science	3	2	5
Recreation	3	1	4
Home science	1	1	2
Dialogue	1		1
Poetry	1		1
Spare time occupation	1		1
Geography		1	1
Total	38	39	77

TABLE

BOOKS

Principal theme	NUMBER OF BOOKS		Total
	Popular	Less Popular	
Life-sketch of great men.	6	3	9
Description of scientific phenomena	4	3	7
Village and district administration	3	4	7
Work and industrial development	1	6	7
Description of imaginative objectives	6		6
Human body and its hygiene	2	4	6
Agricultural devices		6	6
India and its progress	3	2	5
Hindu religion and important festivals	3	2	5
Cultural History	3	2	5
Care taking of children and family management	2	2	4
Citizenship		3	3
Description of animals	2		2
The use of property and its deposit.	1	1	2
Games and recreation	2		2
Diet		1	1
Total	38	39	77